

THE TRULY BLESSED MAN

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*“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly;
nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
But his delight is in the law of the LORD: and in his law doth he meditate day and night.
And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season:
his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”*
Psalm 1:1-3

IT is an old saying and possibly a true one, that every man is seeking after happiness. If it be so, then every man should read this Psalm, for this directs us where happiness is to be found in its highest degree and purest form. “Blessed,” says David, “is such and such a man,” and the word which he uses is, in the original, exceedingly expressive. It implies a sort of plurality of blessedness—“Blessednesses are to the man” and it is scarcely known whether the word is an adjective or a noun, as if the blessedness qualified the whole of life and was, in itself, better even than life itself.

The very highest degree of happiness is blessedness, “these blessednesses,” as Ainsworth says, “heaped up one upon the other.” Surely this is the very highest to which the human heart can aspire. Let us then, this evening, come with attentive hearts to consider in the light of revelation the character of the blessed man. We will begin by considering—

I. WHO THE “BLESSED MAN” IS.

The description given of him is simply this, that *he is a man*. There are moral qualities given, but the only thing said of him, in the first place, is that he is a man. Here is something very suggestive, for he is a person *subject to the common sorrows of humanity*. If we hear of a person greatly blessed by the sense of Christ’s presence, and so enabled to walk in holiness and much usefulness, we cherish the delusion that he must have been better than the ordinary run of men, certainly not such a one as ourselves.

Ah! but how great is the mistake! God fashions all hearts alike and if there be distinctions they are of grace, not of betterness by nature. The most blessed man is still a man. He must suffer pain, or pine in sickness, endure losses and crosses, and yet in it all be a blessed man.

Being a man, he is also *subject to infirmities*—perhaps of a quick temper, or of a high and haughty spirit. He may be tempted to sloth or a besetting sin of another kind. Still being a man he must have some infirmity and yet, none the less is he blessed. Do not dream that the best of men are yet without fault. They will confess to you that they have—

*“To wrestle hard as we do still
With sins and doubts and fears.”*

More than this, it appears that *he has to endure the same temptations that we have*. “The way of sinners” often crosses his path. The “seat of the scornful” is sometimes next door to his own—or even under the same roof. He is not blind—he is obliged to see the lust which struts through the street. He is not deaf—he is forced to hear the lascivious song as it floats on the midnight air. He is subject to like passions, and tempted in all points as we are, and yet *he* is blessed! Only a man, but much more than he would have been, had not God blessed him.

Observe, too, *he does not hold any eminent position*. It is not, “Blessed is the king, blessed is the scholar, blessed is the rich,” but “Blessed is the man.” This blessedness is as attainable by the poor, the forgotten, and the obscure, as by those whose names figure in history and are trumpeted by fame. It is not to the hermit who lives alone, but to the workman toiling among his fellows. Not to the man who wears a surplice and assumes the exclusive title of, “priest”—but it comes to any man in fustian, or corduroy, who loves God and seeks to obey Him. His position has nothing to do with it. His character has everything to do with it. He is a man and nothing but a man, though grace makes him much more.

The Psalm reveals to us, too, that in order to secure his blessedness, *he is a man needing help*. He is likened to a tree. It must drink of the rivers of water and so this man must live upon divine grace. “His way” is said to be “known to the Lord,” implying that God’s approval of his way brings him strength.

The best of men cannot live upon themselves. Our hearts are like the fire in the Interpreter’s house which the enemy tried to quench, but blazed the more because a man stood behind the wall and fed the flame from a vessel of oil in his hand. His is a secret and mysterious power—the work of the Holy Spirit—who “works in us to will and do of God’s good pleasure.” In ourselves we are as weak as we can be, and left to ourselves would soon fall into some sin.

There is in the Psalm, however, one word which truly describes this man, and that is, that *he is a righteous man*! Observe the last verse, “The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous.” The balance of this man’s nature has been readjusted by the divine Scale-maker. He was once all out of gear—put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, but now his judgment is rectified, and in spirit and character he is a righteous man. Once he was naked and defiled, but he has been washed in the fountain filled with blood and clothed with the righteousness of Christ, a garment glittering with gold and silver threads, and all by faith.

This is the description of the “blessed man,” but still I beg you to remember he is only a man. Some such were born in the lowliest paths of life, educated in the most slender fashion, yet they have been among the finest witnesses and most heroic martyrs for their Lord. The brightest spirits that now wave the palm branch and strike the golden lyres most rapturously, were but sons and daughters of Adam, like ourselves.

Ezekiel, privileged to see more visions perhaps than any other prophet, is constantly called “son of man,” as if God would keep him humble, reminding him of the hole of the pit whence he was digged. However blessed you may get, my brother, it is still only, “Blessed is the man.” So I have tried to put the ladder down to you who are beginners in the heavenly life, to show you that there is not a long step to take at first. You are a man, and the text comes to you with, “Blessed is the man!” May it be true of all of us.

Now, we get, following on this—

II. WHAT THE “BLESSED MAN” AVOIDS.

There is, I believe, a book published which is entitled, *What to Eat, Drink, and Avoid*. I should imagine the third section to be by far the largest portion, for there are a thousand things to be avoided. Now in this Psalm it appears that the divinely blessed man avoids *the common way of ungodly persons*. The ungodly are not necessarily drunkards or swearers. These are ungodly, of course, but not all ungodly persons are like them.

The ungodly are just your go-easy sort of people. They may go to church or chapel, or go nowhere. They are often very respectable, good neighbors, kind to the poor. They may hold public office and enter Parliament. There is no place they may not fill, for it is not considered an offense among men to be “ungodly.”

The tragic folly and sin of these people is that they have neglected the chief thing to be remembered, namely, that there is a God, that they are His creatures, and being His creatures, ought to live to Him. But they give God no part of their lives and He is in none of their thoughts. They will think of their neighbors, remember their friends and acquaintances. The duties of the second table of the law they observe in a measure, but the first table is despised as though it had never been written.

The blessed man, however, avoids this. He sees that God, who fills all things, ought to fill His thoughts, and that the great end of his being should be “to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever.” It is chiefly here that the godly man differs from others. He does not consider first how the world regards a thing, but how God looks at it.

If they ask, “Is it fashionable?” he replies, “the fashion of this world passes away.” “But will you gain by it?” “Ah!” says he, “that is not the measuring line I carry. I am content to lose, so that I can keep my word and serve God.” The first thought of the truly blessed man is how he can best glorify the name of Christ and in so doing he avoids “the counsel of the ungodly.”

In the next place he avoids “*the way of sinners*.” Sinners live for pleasures. The Christian has his, but they would never please the worldling, nor would the worldling’s gratify his new tastes. The sinner can do a thousand things which the saint cannot do, and would not if he could—and the Christian can do a thousand things of which the sinner knows nothing. Let a thing be labeled “sin” in God’s Book, and though men may laugh at it, call it a mere joke, a piece of fun, a peccadillo, the godly man accepts God’s labeling of it and leaves the “way of sinners” let it be never so smoothly turfed, and grassed ever so attractively.

The true Christian shuns “*the seat of the scornful*.” It makes his blood boil when he hears God’s name profaned. His heart is full of horror because of the wicked who obey not God’s law. Though he is told to “prove all things,” he knows that a very slight test is enough for some things and he puts them quickly aside to hold fast only that which is good.

Some professors like to sit near the seat of the scornful, “for argument’s sake,” they say. ’Twas thus that Mother Eve ruined the whole world, by listening to the serpent’s suggestions—and much mischief has been done in a similar way since then to Christian faith and simplicity. Ah! the further I can get from the scorner’s seat the better, and there let him sit alone!

Away! Away! Away! for behold the day comes when like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, the profane shall go down alive into the pit. Happy is the man who shall escape that horror, by keeping far, far away. These are some of the things the truly “blessed man” avoids—and the more he avoids them, the more blessed he is.

Once more, he avoids *the very persons of sinners* except so far as he has to deal with them in civil matters and the common courtesies and duties of life. They are not his bosom friends—he would never dream of being unequally yoked with them in marriage. He shuns their company all he can, for his congenial associates are elsewhere. Their ways, example, words, he avoids. As he would keep from plague-infected places and people, so he strives to keep aloof from men who blaspheme, lest their profanity should taint and defile him.

“Father,” said a young fellow, “I can go into such and such company and not be hurt.” The father stooped down to the fireplace and picked up a piece of coal. “There,” said he to his son “take that in your hands.” The son shrank from the black cinder. “Why,” said the father, “it will not burn you!” “No! but it will blacken me,” he replied. Ah! bad company can blacken even where it does not burn, so keep away from it. You can never retain this blessedness unless, like the man described here, you walk not in the counsel of the ungodly, you stand not in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful.

And now for the third truth of God here insisted on—

III. WHEREIN THE “BLESSED MAN” DELIGHTS.

“His delight is in the law of the LORD.” Man must have some delight, some supreme pleasure. His heart was never meant to be a vacuum. If not filled with the best things, it will be filled with the unworthy and disappointing. As we remarked the other night when our text was, “Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels come and ministered unto Him” [See sermon #2236, Prodigal Love for The Prodigal Son]—man cannot be alone, for if evil departs, good will come—but if good is driven away, evil will come.

If you do not fill the measure with wheat, the arch-enemy will fill it with chaff. If the river flows not with sparkling sweet water, it will soon reek with pestilent miasma. Take care to have something worthy to delight in.

I do not know how those people go through the world who never have any sort of pure excitement, but always go moping about from the first of January to the last of December. Life must be to them a sorry drag. The sparkling eye and the smiling face are the things God meant men to have, and they do not realize life's full beauty unless at times they possess them.

Why, the Christian, above all men, should have what the world calls his, "holidays and bonfire nights"—his days of rejoicing, times of holy laughter, seasons of overflowing delight. Nay! I think he should strive to have them always, for we are told, "Delight thyself in the LORD, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

If we take our religion as men do medicine, it is of little good to us. Some folks go to the house of God as you might suppose criminals would go to the whipping-post. But I like to see people come up to the house of God with glad alacrity, like children going home, or like those who are bound for the place—

*"Where my best friends and kindred dwell,
Where God my Savior reigns."*

The true Christian has his holy delights and chief among them is his reveling in the law of the LORD, the Word of God. Of course, David had not a fourth of what we possess—it was a very little Bible then—but it has gone on increasing like a majestic river, until it is the wondrous volume we have. We, therefore, should take ten times more delight in it than the Psalmist did.

Why do Christians delight in it? *Because it is God's law.* Anything belonging to God should delight the believer. A child far from home is intensely pleased with anything that father gave him. A letter from home is a welcome and joyous thing. Here is a letter from home telling us of our Father's grace and permitting us to read the precious secrets of His heart of love for us. We delight in it *because it comes with divine authority to us*, and so brings confidence and joy to our hearts.

The other day I was reading a book in which six reasons were given why the Christian delights in God's law. First, *because of its antiquity.* Many people delight in old coins. Some will go down to the Thames and buy pieces of old iron that are rusty, under the idea that they are antiques—which they may or may not be.

Ah! there is nothing so old as this Book! The first writings of Hesiod fall short at least five hundred years of the writings of Moses, so that that part of the blessed volume has divine antiquity about it, and is radiant with divine inspiration. Let us ever delight in it then.

We delight in it *because of the justice of it.* There is a law revealed in it, if perfectly carried out, no man would hurt his neighbor, but love him as he loves himself. No rank or class would press heavily upon another, and each would remember, consider, try to bless the other. It is made as no human law can be made and every person yielding to it feels it in his conscience to be just.

We prize the Book, too, *because of its lofty wisdom.* There is more wisdom for the life here than anywhere else besides. We do not come here for astronomy, or geology, but we come here for the highest of all wisdom—the science of God—for, though Pope says,—

"The proper study of mankind is man,"

we beg his pardon. A yet more proper study of mankind is God, and here, in this Book of God, we learn of His love to us in the person of Christ Jesus and grasp the science—heavenliest wisdom—of a crucified Redeemer.

We delight in the Book, also, *because it is true*. Fiction may be read or not, as men's tastes may direct, but it is of infinite value to have a book in which every word stands fast, when like a dream, heaven and earth shall have melted away.

Again, we delight in it *because it is pleasant*. There are sweet nesses in it better than the honey droppings from the honeycomb. When we read it, it makes the godly heart to beat at a high and glorious rate, and sometimes takes him on the wings of eagles, bearing him to a loftier Pisgah than Moses ever stood upon, and so helping him to see the land on the further side of Jordan—his eternal rest and heritage.

Lastly, the Christian delights in “the law of the LORD,” *because it is profitable*. This book enriches with the best of wealth and stored-up treasures for all eternity. Now gathering up all these reasons I want earnestly to ask each one of us here, “Do you delight in this Book?” Not, do you read it—but do you read it with delight? To go to it dragged there by duty, is miserably to miss its best messages and is no evidence of true godliness. To put a sentence of it under the tongue as a sweet morsel, to grow healthy upon it when you are sick, rich upon it when poor—this is one of the truest tests of being a “blessed man”—but if you do not enjoy this, God help you to begin at the foundation. Repent of sin, seek the Savior, or otherwise where God is you can never come.

But I must hasten on to ask—

IV. WHAT OCCUPIES THE “BLESSED MAN’S” TIME?

“*In his law doth he meditate day and night.*” By day he gets little intervals of time to read it, so he steals from his nightly rest moments in which to meditate upon it. Reading reaps the wheat, meditation threshes it, grinds it, and makes it into bread. Reading is like the ox feeding—meditation is it digesting when chewing the cud. It is not only reading that does us good, but the soul inwardly feeding on it and digesting it.

A preacher once told me that he had read the Bible through twenty times on his knees and had never found the doctrine of Election there. Very likely not. It is a most uncomfortable position in which to read. If he had sat in an easy chair, he would have been better able to understand it. To read on one's knees is like a Popish penance. Besides, he read in the wrong way—if instead of twenty times galloping through, he had read once and pondered continually—he probably would have seen clearer than he evidently did.

It is said of some horses that they “bolt their oats.” This good brother was “bolting” Holy Scripture, and so getting little nutriment out of it. The inward meditation is the thing that makes the soul rich towards God. This is the godly man's occupation. Put the spice into the mortar by reading, beat it with the pestle of meditation—so shall the sweet perfume be exhaled.

May I ask whether there are not some here who do not meditate on God's Word at all? If so, then this solemn thought will seize us—if you have not the blessedness of God's Word, you must inherit its curse. Let us see to it, and now beginning at the cross of Jesus Christ, study the mystery of His wounds for our sin, and then go on afterward to meditate in His law day and night.

This brings us now to the very center of the Psalm's teaching.

V. WHEREIN IS THIS MAN SO DIVINELY “BLESSED”?

Very briefly on each point. He is blessed first of all, *for life*. “He shall be like a tree.” Not a dry, dead, sapless pole. His life is such that unregenerate men are strangers to it. He has been begotten again unto a living hope. The sap of God's grace is in him—he is united to Christ his Root, and because He lives and lives in him, he lives also.

He has *stability*. The tree planted. Well-rooted in the ground. The wicked are like the chaff which the wind drives away, but the Christian's life is stable. “Solid joys and lasting pleasures” are his portion. He has, too, the *gladness of growth*. The tree remains not the sapling, but grows upward, downward, abroad, spreading its branches. So the godly man is always learning more of his heavenly Father and endeavoring to be more conformed to the image of his Lord.

He has the blessing, too, of *favoured position*. Planted by God Himself—not self-sown or the foundling of the wind. If he is a servant, he believes God has put him where he should be. Poor or rich, he learns to be content for he is a tree divinely planted. He is *well sustained*. Whatever is really good for him, God has pledged Himself to give. Not a tree in the desert, but placed where the rivulets come rippling to his roots. He hears his Master say, “Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shall thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.”

He has yet again, *beauty in God’s sight*. Beauty of an unfading kind—“his leaf also shall not wither.” When personal beauty decays by reason of old age, and beauty of wit and learning be assailed by approaching death, still he shall be fair, in the likeness of his Master, as a young olive tree, and grow as a cedar in the court of his God.

And to crown all, he has *constant prosperity*. “Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” He may not grow rich, but he still prospers. His ships may be broken at Ezion-Geber, but he can thank God even for that, for their breaking may help him to heavenly grace, through his very tribulations—so he is content to lose in his possessions if his soul is made wealthy in faith and love, and sweet submission to God’s will.

This metaphor of the flourishing tree is a very beautiful one. See it there, always green, loaded with fruit, standing where it can never know drought. If God has taught us to delight in His law, that is our true picture and portrait. Is it ours?

But to close, here we are made to ask—

VI. WHO IS THIS BLESSED MAN’S GUARDIAN?

There must be somebody who takes care of him or he could not be so blessed as he is. Ah! “The LORD knoweth the way of the righteous.” If you are resting in Christ for salvation, the Lord knows your way. The minister knows nothing of your trials—you half wish you might dare tell him so that he might guide and comfort. But if he knows not, the Lord knows all your way.

Are you sore depressed, do waves of grief roll over your soul? Well, pour out your heart to God, for He knows, and knows how to help. If the Lord did not look after us in our best days, we should perish by the sunstroke of too much prosperity, and if He did not watch us in our worst days, we should be frost-killed by the cruel Arctic winds of adversity.

But says one, “How may I begin this way?” “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,” and this is the fear of the Lord—to trust your soul in the hands of God’s appointed Savior and know you are safe. Say from your very heart,—

*“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd’st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God! I come.”*

If your very soul sings that, you are on the road to true blessedness and all that is in this Psalm shall be yours in life, in death, and throughout eternity. May God bless you thus, for Jesus’ sake. Amen

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 32

“A Psalm of David, Maschil,” that is to say, an instructive Psalm. I suppose that David wrote it after he had been forgiven and restored to divine favor. I think we may read it as a part of our own experience—either of conversion or when restored after backsliding.

Verses 1-2. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

Twice he says “blessed.” He had felt the weight of sin. He had been sorely troubled and now that Nathan is sent to him with the word of pardon, “The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die,” he counts himself doubly blessed—blessed not the man who has never sinned, blessed is he who having sinned is forgiven—not the man who has no sin, but whose sin is covered.

Wonderful word! Both in English and Hebrew it sounds very much alike, the sacred *kopher*, the cover which covers sin so that it is hidden even from the eye of God Himself! A wondrous deed! Blessed is the man who knows that divine covering! “Blessed,” says he, “is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

All along after David’s sin, he became very crafty and very cunning, full of guile. You know the dodges that he had to cover up his sin—he tried to play some of his tricks on God Himself, but he felt it was a mischievous thing to do—he was uneasy, he was unhappy. We have sometimes heard it said that after David sinned he remained insensible for nine months until he received the divine rebuke, but it was not so.

He remained very sensitive, very depressed, very unhappy, and he was trying this way and that to cover up his sin and guile. He could not do it. He ought to make a clean breast of it and confess it before God, and give up his crooked ways and his ideas of excusing himself, and when he had done that—when he had given up his guile and his guilt, too—then he got the double blessing, “blessed, blessed!”

If there are any of you who are treading crooked ways with God and man, give them up. I know of nothing that will make you give them up like knowing free, full, perfect pardon through the precious blood of Christ and the free grace of God. The two things go together, guilt and guile—the two things go out of us together—when guilt is pardoned, guile is killed. Now hear how David felt while he was conscious of his sin and yet was not right with God.

3. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.*

A wanton glance, the sin with Bathsheba—where was the pleasure of it when it cost him all this? Such groaning that his very bones got old as if they were rotten, and his heart was heavy as if he wished to die.

4. *For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me.*

God was with His hand pressing him heavily, forcing his sin home upon him, making him say, “My sin is ever before me.” Oh! the misery of sinning to a child of God. Do not dream that we can ever have any pleasure in sin—the worldling may, but the believer never can. To him it is a deadly viper that will fill his veins with burning poison.

4. *My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.*

When he tried to pray, it was a dried-up prayer. He tried to make a Psalm, but it was a dried-up song. He tried to do some good, for he was still a good man, but it was all withered without the Spirit of God. His moisture was gone out of him, turned into the drought of summer, and summer in David’s country was a very droughty thing indeed.

Every human thing despaired, the grass seemed to turn to dust—it was so with him. If you go into sin, this is what will happen to you. If you are a true child of God, you will have all the joy of God taken from you, all the moisture of your heart dried up, and you will be like a parched, withered thing. “Selah.” It was time to have a pause in the music, he was on so base a key, he had need now to tighten the harp strings and rise to something a little sweeter.

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*

He must come to confession—full, spontaneous, unreserved—there must be a resolution. “I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord”—a firm determination to hide nothing, to see the sin yourself, and to tell the Lord that you see it, and to confess it with great grief and sorrow. What a wonderful word that is, “I said I will confess, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.”

God took away the sin. Ay, the very pith and marrow of it—"the iniquity of my sin"—taking the bone away and the marrow of the bone, too. "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin"—it has all gone, wholly gone. By one stroke of God's divine grace, the sinner was pardoned. "Selah"—again.

6. *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.*

For *this* (because of this), and for *this blessing*, "*shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found.*" The pardoning God must be sought. There is an attraction in the greatness of His mercy. They that are godly, even though they have offended and gone astray, must come back and seek for pardon in a time when You may be found.

"Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him." The godly man is safe when the floods are out. There are times when great waters prevailed in David's country—the brooks sometimes turned to rivers and came down with a rush when they were least expected. And here he says that when such a thing as that shall happen, yet God's people shall be saved. They shall come, but they shall not come nigh unto them.

Let me read those words again. If you have gone to God in the day of your sin, and have found pardon, He that took away the sin will take away the sorrow. "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him."

7. *Thou art my hiding place;*

Precious words! "*Thou art my hiding place.*" Not, "*Thou art a hiding place,*" but "*Thou are MY hiding place.*" A man who is beset by foes does not stand still and say, "Yes, I can see there is a hiding place there," but he runs to it. Beloved, run to your hiding place this evening, each one of you who can have a claim and interest in Christ, run to Him now, and say,—

7. *Thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.*

He has come up to us out of the roaring to the singing. All the day long he roars, and now all the day long he sings. He sees songs everywhere. He lives in a circle of music, his heart is so glad. Well may he put another "Selah," for he has smitten the strings very joyfully and they need tuning again.

8. *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide you with mine eye.*

Here the Speaker is changed. "I will instruct thee." "I have forgiven you." "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go." "I have prayed you back to the way, now I will teach you in the way you shall go." "I will guide thee with mine eye"—your own might lead you astray. "I will guide thee with mine eye." I will be on the path. I will fix My eye upon you. "I will guide thee with mine eye."

9. *Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.*

"Be ye not as the horse," not only David, but all of you. If God will guide you, be guided. If He will teach you, be teachable. If He will be gracious to you, be gracious towards Him.

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.*

"Many sorrows shall be to the wicked." David had found that out—his sin had brought him a transient pleasure, but a lasting misery. He shall have a bodyguard of mercy, God will be gracious to him, tender to him, and will not leave him if he is trusting in the Lord.

11. *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.*

"Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous." Be glad. Well, but you cannot always be glad, says one. "Be glad in the LORD." You may always be glad in Him. Here is an unchanging source of joy. "Rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy." Here, the man that was silent has gone as far as shouting now. Is it not enough to make him so? Twice he was blessed in the first and second verses—and now, he has been pardoned, he has been delivered, he has been compassed about with mercy. Why, he must be glad! "Shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart." God bless you in the reading of His Word!

(As the sermon and exposition are short, the publishers have included Mr. Spurgeon's Commentary upon the text from *The Treasury of David*.)

Verses 1-2. *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*

"*BLESSED*"—see how this Book of Psalms opens with a benediction, even as did the famous sermon of our Lord upon the Mount! The word translated "blessed" is a very expressive one. The original word is plural, and it is a controverted matter whether it is an adjective or a substantive.

Hence we may learn the multiplicity of the blessings which shall rest upon the man whom God hath justified, and the perfection and greatness of the blessedness he shall enjoy. We might read it, "Oh, the blessednesses!" and we may well regard it (as Ainsworth does) as a joyful acclamation of the gracious man's felicity. May the like benediction rest on us!

Here the gracious man is described both negatively (verse 1) and positively (verse 2). He is a man *who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly*. He takes wiser counsel and walks in the commandments of the Lord his God. To him the ways of piety are paths of peace and pleasantness. His footsteps are ordered by the Word of God, and not by the cunning and wicked devices of carnal men. It is a rich sign of inward grace when the outward walk is changed and when ungodliness is put far from our actions.

Note next, *he standeth not in the way of sinners*. His company is of a choicer sort than it was. Although a sinner himself, he is now a blood-washed sinner quickened by the Holy Spirit, and renewed in heart. Standing by the rich grace of God in the congregation of the righteous, he dares not herd with the multitude that do evil.

Again it is said, "*nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful*." He finds no rest in the atheist's scoffings. Let others make a mock of sin, of eternity, of hell and heaven, and of the Eternal God. This man has learned better philosophy than that of the infidel and has too much sense of God's presence to endure to hear His name blasphemed. The seat of the scorner may be very lofty, but it is very near to the gate of hell. Let us flee from it, for it shall soon be empty, and destruction shall swallow up the man who sits therein.

Mark the gradation in the first verse:

He walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor *standeth* in the way of *sinners*,
Nor *SITTETH* in the *SEAT* of *SCORNFUL*.

When men are living in sin they go from bad to worse. At first they merely *walk* in the counsel of the careless and *ungodly* who forget God—the evil is rather practical than habitual—but after that they become habituated to evil and they *stand* in the way of open *sinners* who willfully violate God's commandments—and if let alone, they go one step further, and become themselves pestilent teachers and tempters of others, and thus they *sit in the seat of the scornful*. They have taken their degree in vice, and as true Doctors of Damnation, they are installed, and are looked up to by others as Masters in Belial.

But the blessed man, the man to whom all the blessings of God belong, can hold no communion with such characters as these. He keeps himself pure from these lepers. He puts away evil things from him as garments spotted by the flesh. He comes out from among the wicked, and goes without the camp, bearing the reproach of Christ. O for grace to be thus separate from sinners.

And now mark his positive character. "*His delight is in the law of the LORD*." He is not *under* the law as a curse and condemnation, but he is *in* it, and he delights to be in it as his rule of life. He delights, moreover, to meditate in it, to read it *by day*, and think upon it *by night*. He takes a text and carries it

with him all day long. And in the night-watches, when sleep forsakes his eyelids, he muses upon the Word of God.

In the *day* of his prosperity, he sings *psalms* out of the word of God, and in the *night* of his affliction, he comforts himself with *promises* out of the same Book. “The law of the LORD” is the daily bread of the true believer. And yet, in David’s day, how small was the volume of inspiration, for they had scarcely anything save the first five books of Moses! How much more, then, should we prize the whole written Word which it is our privilege to have in all our houses!

But, alas, what ill-treatment is given to this angel from heaven! We are not all Berean searchers of the Scriptures. How few among us can lay claim to the benediction of the text! Perhaps some of you can claim a sort of negative purity, because you do not walk in the way of the ungodly, but let me ask you—Is your delight in the law of God? Do you study God’s Word? Do you make it the man of your right hand—your best companion and hourly guide? If not, this blessing belongs not to you.

3. *And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*

“*And he shall be like a tree planted,*”—not a wild tree, but “a tree *planted*,” chosen, considered as property, cultivated and secured from the last terrible uprooting, for “every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up,” Matthew 15:13.

“*By the rivers of water,*” so that even if one river should fail, he has another. The rivers of pardon and the rivers of grace, the rivers of the promise, and the rivers of communion with Christ, are never failing sources of supply.

He is “like a tree planted by the rivers of water, *that bringeth forth his fruit in his season,*” not unseasonable graces, like untimely figs, which are never full-flavored. But the man who delights in God’s Word, being taught by it, bringeth forth patience in the time of suffering, faith in the day of trial, and holy joy in the hour of prosperity. Fruitfulness is an essential quality of a gracious man and that fruitfulness should be seasonable.

“*His leaf also shall not wither.*” His faintest word shall be everlasting. His little deeds of love shall be had in remembrance. Not simply shall his fruit be preserved, but *his leaf* also. He shall neither lose his beauty nor his fruitfulness.

“*And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*” Blessed is the man who has such a promise as this. But we must not always estimate the fulfilment of a promise by our own eye-sight. How often, my brethren, if we judge by feeble sense, may we come to the mournful conclusion of Jacob, “All these things are against me!” For though we know our interest in the promise, yet are we so tried and troubled, that sight sees the very reverse of what that promise foretells.

But to the eyes of faith this word is sure, and by it we perceive that our works are prospered, even when everything seems to go against us. It is not outward prosperity which the Christian most desires and values, it is soul prosperity which he longs for. We often, like Jehoshaphat, make ships to go to Tarshish for gold, but they are broken at Ezion-geber.

But even here there is a true prospering, for it is often for the soul’s health that we should be poor, bereaved, and persecuted. Our worst things are often our best things. As there is a curse wrapped up in the wicked man’s mercies, so there is a blessing concealed in the righteous man’s crosses, losses, and sorrows. The trials of the saint are a divine husbandry, by which he grows and brings forth abundant fruit.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.